



Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of October 11, 2026

Prayer of the Week

Jesus, keep my eyes fixed on you. Guard my heart from comparison, fear, and the pressure to measure myself against others. Teach me to trust in your promises so deeply that my faith shapes how I see myself, and how I love others and your created world. Amen.

Monday, October 12

Scripture: James 2:14-26

My brothers and sisters, what good is it if people say they have faith but do nothing to show it? Claiming to have faith can't save anyone, can it? Imagine a brother or sister who is naked and never has enough food to eat. What if one of you said, "Go in peace! Stay warm! Have a nice meal!"? What good is it if you don't actually give them what their body needs? In the same way, faith is dead when it doesn't result in faithful activity. Someone might claim, "You have faith and I have action." But how can I see your faith apart from your actions? Instead, I'll show you my faith by putting it into practice in faithful action. It's good that you believe that God is one. Ha! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble with fear. Are you so slow? Do you need to be shown that faith without actions has no value at all? What about Abraham, our father? Wasn't he shown to be righteous through his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? See, his faith was at work along with his actions. In fact, his faith was made complete by his faithful actions. So the scripture was fulfilled that says, *Abraham believed God, and God regarded him as righteous*. What is more, Abraham was called God's friend. So you see that a person is shown to be righteous through faithful actions and not through faith alone. In the same way, wasn't Rahab the prostitute shown to be righteous when she received the messengers as her guests and then sent them on by another road? As the lifeless body is dead, so faith without actions is dead.

Observation

The book of James is a short book, that reads more like a sermon than letter. Written by James, the brother of Jesus, its goal is to help us incorporate our faith into daily life. Faith is not merely practiced in worship, but encompasses our entire life. These verses are

some of its most famous, declaring, “faith without actions is dead.” James points us to examples of Abraham and Rahab as people who *lived* their faith, and we are encouraged to do the same. What is faith, if it makes no difference in your words and actions?

Application

My middle- and high school Sunday School teacher loved the book of James. Each year, he challenged us to memorize the book (a mere 108 verses). I’m not sure I ever successfully memorized the entire book, but his challenge was still effective, as I remember its message! Faith is meant to change and transform our lives. It’s not meant to be separated from our words or actions but meant to inspire our daily living. How are you *embodying faith* today?

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for giving me a faith that is all consuming. May your life-giving words change and influence me. Help me to see the world through your eyes, as I care for the sick, help the poor, and welcome the stranger. Amen.

Tuesday, October 13

Scripture: Psalm 30:5b-12

Weeping may stay all night, but by morning, joy!
When I was comfortable, I said, “I will never stumble.”
Because it pleased you, Lord,
 you made me a strong mountain.
But then you hid your presence.
 I was terrified.
I cried out to you, Lord.
 I begged my Lord for mercy:
“What is to be gained by my spilled blood,
 by my going down into the pit?
Does dust thank you?
 Does it proclaim your faithfulness?
Lord, listen and have mercy on me!
 Lord, be my helper!”
You changed my mourning into dancing.
 You took off my funeral clothes
 and dressed me up in joy
 so that my whole being
 might sing praises to you and never stop.
Lord, my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

Observation

The Psalmist offers a powerful reminder to us that “joy comes in the morning.” In other words, while troubles and sufferings are part of the human story, so too, is joy and

gladness. What is it we say? The worst thing is never the last thing. God transforms our “mourning into dancing.”

Application

Many worship songs have been inspired by this Psalm. One we regularly sing is *Graves into Gardens*, which declares, “You turn mourning to dancing; you give beauty for ashes. You turn shame into glory, you’re the only one who can.” What are the places of mourning or ash that God might transform? What worries can you offer to God today, trusting that God will see you through the long night into morning?

Prayer

God of graves and gardens, thank you for making all things new. Help me to trust you are with me, even in immense grief or suffering. Give me strength for this season, and guide me into seasons of renewal, resurrection, and dance. Amen.

Wednesday, October 14

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:13-17

Who will harm you if you are zealous for good? But happy are you, even if you suffer because of righteousness! Don’t be terrified or upset by them. Instead, regard Christ the Lord as holy in your hearts. Whenever anyone asks you to speak of your hope, be ready to defend it. Yet do this with respectful humility, maintaining a good conscience. Act in this way so that those who malign your good lifestyle in Christ may be ashamed when they slander you. It is better to suffer for doing good (if this could possibly be God’s will) than for doing evil.

Observation

1 Peter told early Christians to be ready to explain their faith and to suffer for it if necessary. In April 1963, Birmingham, AL jailed Dr. King for a week. In his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, King wrote to local clergy who criticized his civil rights work; he said, “The early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the Church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.”

You may, from time to time, meet people who challenge your beliefs, with a strong air of doubt and skepticism. Many will try to be kind, but like Romans in Peter’s day or segregationists in Dr. King’s, some may not be kind at all. The author of 1 Peter challenged readers to stay respectful and humble in all situations. How easy or hard do you find it to remain respectful and humble when someone challenges your faith?

Application

Peter said, “Happy are you, even if you suffer because of righteousness!” James 1:2 said, “Think of the various tests you encounter as occasions for joy.” But they were in the

vicious Roman Empire or first-century Jerusalem's highly anti-Christian climate. How do their words offer challenge and encouragement to us today? How can you be fearless about transformation without being hostile and hurtful?

Prayer

O Lord, in my passion to live out my Christian faith, help me to be humble to all I meet. Let your loving kindness flow through me as I represent you to the world around me. Amen.

Thursday, October 15

Scripture: Luke 22:25-30

But Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles rule over their subjects, and those in authority over them are called 'friends of the people.' But that's not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant. So which one is greater, the one who is seated at the table or the one who serves at the table? Isn't it the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

"You are the ones who have continued with me in my trials. And I confer royal power on you just as my Father granted royal power to me. Thus you will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones overseeing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Observation

Jesus calls us to lead by serving. To me, this feels counter to many of the messages of our world. But a servant's heart is one of humility and love, that looks upon others and sees their belovedness fully. We all have value, not because of what we produce or earn, but because we are marked by God.

Application

Many have written powerful books about servant leadership. Do you find "servant leadership" just an idealistic oxymoron, unrealistic in the "real world"? Have you had the privilege of working with and learning from one or more true "servant leaders"? How might you lead with a servant's heart?

Prayer

Jesus, teach me how to find my glory in serving God and others, as you did, rather than in having others serve me. This is a hard prayer, but I mean it. Amen.

Friday, October 16

Scripture: Matthew 5:43-48

"You have heard that it was said, *You must love your neighbor* and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who harass you so that you will be acting

as children of your Father who is in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing? Don't even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore, just as your heavenly Father is complete in showing love to everyone, so also you must be complete.

Observation

This is a challenging passage, isn't it? Love my enemy? How much easier it is to have a heart of disdain than one of love. But Jesus calls us to love all people, not only those who are easy to.

Application

John Wesley, Methodism's founder, said of Matthew 5:48: Jesus called us to be "perfect in love," always growing toward loving with God's all-inclusive love. He rejected the idea that "perfect" meant never sinning. Does it challenge you more, or less, to see "perfect" as about the state of your heart rather than just your outward actions? How might you live (even on social media) with God's generosity toward the "unrighteous" people you know?

Prayer

Jesus, make me an instrument of your peace. Keep teaching me to trust in the long-term power of love, the world-changing power that makes me a follower of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, October 17

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:5-8

But you must keep control of yourself in all circumstances. Endure suffering, do the work of a preacher of the good news, and carry out your service fully. I'm already being poured out like a sacrifice to God, and the time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. At last the champion's wreath that is awarded for righteousness is waiting for me. The Lord, who is the righteous judge, is going to give it to me on that day. He's giving it not only to me but also to all those who have set their heart on waiting for his appearance.

Observation

In 2 Timothy, Paul knew his earthly life would soon end because the Roman emperor hoped killing him might stop others from becoming Christians. Scholar N. T. Wright said, "The picture we get...is of a man facing serious trouble and likely death, beset with problems and anxieties.... He lives in the present world, Caesar's world, as already a cheerful citizen of the world to come, Jesus' world." (Wright, N. T., *Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus*. Westminster John Knox Press.) How might our faith in Jesus give us courage to live today?

Application

Paul wrote, “I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith” (v 7). How is it that our daily lives point to a faith well lived, well embodied? Ask Jesus to give you courage to fully embody your faith today.

Prayer

Jesus, you walked into the darkest, deepest place we face—into death itself—and then emerged, alive and victorious. Keep me on course to end this earthly life in faith and triumph, trusting in you. Amen